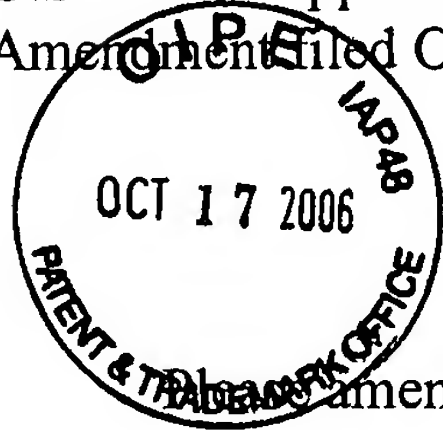


U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 10/662,450

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**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend claim 9, as follows. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-8 (Canceled).

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): A method for preparing slurry containing a slurry stock solution and an oxidizing agent, the method comprising the steps of:

~~setting~~ determining an initial mixing amount of the oxidizing agent to be supplied to a preparation tank less than the amount required for the oxidizing agent to match a target concentration of the oxidizing agent in the slurry;

under control of a controller, supplying the slurry stock solution and the determined initial mixing amount of the oxidizing agent in a preparation tank to a preparation tank and mixing the slurry stock solution and the determined initial mixing amount of the oxidizing agent in the preparation tank to prepare slurry in which the concentration of the oxidizing agent is less than the target concentration;

detecting the concentration of the oxidizing agent in the slurry; and then

under control of the controller, additionally supplying the oxidizing agent to the preparation tank in accordance with the detected result so that the concentration of the oxidizing agent in the slurry becomes equal to the target concentration.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 9, further comprising the step of:

circulating the slurry in the preparation tank.

Claim 11 (Original): The method according to claim 10, wherein the detecting step includes continuously detecting the concentration of the oxidizing agent in the slurry that is being circulated.

Claim 12 (Original): The method according to claim 11, wherein the additionally supplying step is performed in accordance with the concentration of the oxidizing agent in the slurry that is detected in the detecting step.

Claims 13-14 (Canceled).